

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Storm Ridge Ranch School  
95 West 3000 North  
Monroe, Utah 84754**

**November 6, 2003**



Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Storm Ridge Ranch School  
95 West 3000 North  
Monroe, UT 84754**

**November 6, 2003**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

**Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF  
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

**Patti Harrington, Associate Superintendent**

**Vicky Dahn, Director  
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist  
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Salt Lake City, Utah**

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## FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, November 6, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Storm Ridge Ranch School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by School Administrator Trina Swalberg is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Storm Ridge Ranch School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Storm Ridge Ranch School.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

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**P.O. Box 144200**  
**Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

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Salt Lake City, UT 84108  
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**Sara V. Sinclair\***

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Phone: (435) 754-0216

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Trina Swalberg.....	School Administrator/Instructor
Brian Wood .....	Assistant Director/Training Coordinator
Myron A. Mickelson .....	Assistant Supervisor, YIC, Sevier School District
Steven Rosenswieg .....	Instructor
Genevieve Rodriguez.....	Receptionist/Assistant Teacher
Malana Jenses .....	Assistant Teacher
MaryAnn Larsen .....	Program Director
Richard Larsen .....	Farm and Ranch Manager

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Ralph P. Vander Heide, Ph.D., Accreditation Consultant,  
Visiting Team Chairperson

Judith Vander Heide, Accreditation Consultant

## **REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **STORM RIDGE RANCH**

#### **CHAPTER 1:**

#### **INTRODUCTION - DESCRIBING THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT, THE SELF-IMPROVEMENT PLAN, CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL, AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

A team of two educators visited Storm Ridge Ranch, a special purpose school for boys aged 12-17, on November 6, 2003, to complete a site evaluation as part of the requirements for accreditation by the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities (NAAS) and the Utah State Office of Education (USOE).

Storm Ridge Ranch was established in 1986 in response to the growing number of adolescents becoming involved, for various reasons, in the juvenile justice system. It is licensed as a fourteen-bed facility. Currently, 16 boys aged 12-18 are in residence. The average stay is six to nine months. The purpose of the school is to assist the boys to become productive citizens. The coordinated efforts of various agencies help, teach, and guide to achieve that end. These include Youth Corrections, Juvenile Court, youth and civic leaders, mental health professionals, and Social Services as well as the teachers, ranch staff, and parents.

Storm Ridge Ranch is a working ranch located on approximately 30,000 acres in a beautiful rural site in Monroe, Utah. Great effort is made to create a “family-like atmosphere” in order to promote the development of strong positive values which will be adhered to throughout the student’s life. The objective is to build self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

The young men, referred to as “youths,” are given responsibilities that aim to provide opportunities to fulfill court obligations such as work hours, court restitution, and fines. Through performing these tasks the youths also receive vocational training that, it is assumed, will assist them when they enter the workplace. They are expected to participate in the everyday running of the ranch, including the care and upkeep of the livestock, horticultural activities, and upkeep and maintenance of facilities.

The Visiting Team met in the morning with the school faculty and discussed the self-study, which the school had completed. The Visiting Team proceeded to visit classes, the dormitories, and the ranch, and to speak with students and other constituents.

Representatives of Storm Ridge Ranch reported that they had participated in a workshop that covered Utah’s “Collaborating for Student Achievement” process. Furthermore, the school attempted to follow the guidelines of *School Improvement: Focusing on Student*



*Performance* published by the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE).

However, The school's self-study did not include a self-improvement plan, nor was there any indication of desired results for student learning (DRSLs) for all students. In general, the school had not followed the self-study format that is expected of Utah schools. Nevertheless, the report did contain part of the required information. It appears that the entire school staff was involved to varying degrees in the preparation of the self-study.

Due to this lack of vital information, the school was granted an extension of eight weeks in order to complete the self-study. The Visiting Team learned that, for the most part, the information had been compiled. The Visiting Team also learned that the school had not been properly directed as to the required format. The State Office of Education and the Visiting Team received the expanded and completed report on December 17, 2003.

The Visiting Team reviewed with representatives of the school the formatting and additional information that is needed for the school's self-study. It was pointed out to the school that much progress has been made in some areas since the school was granted Candidacy status in November, 2000. The Visiting Team observed that:

- All teachers are licensed in the state of Utah.
- The mission statement and beliefs have been revisited and revised.
- It appears that the Utah Core Curriculum is being followed and credits are being properly granted through the school. Formerly, credit was granted through the Sevier School District.
- A self-study was conducted.

## **CHAPTER 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONSE TEAM'S PERSPECTIVE AS TO THE WORK OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN ADDRESSING EACH ASPECT OF THE SELF-STUDY REPORT**

### **The School Profile**

The school profile portrays to some extent the school population, environment, curriculum, and other relevant information about the school. However this information needs to be better aligned with the mission, philosophy, and educational direction of Storm Ridge Ranch.

The following information was given:

- Brief historical background and statement of the purpose of the school
- A description of the program and its threefold structure (residential, therapeutic, academic)

- Information on assessment and testing
- A list of course offerings and descriptions, with inclusion of required hours for the granting of credit
- Information on inservice training for staff
- Job descriptions and outlines of staff responsibilities
- A list of students, including grade levels and ethnicity
- A list of staff members with photos, including information on their educational backgrounds and state licenses
- National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) surveys of assessment results in mathematics and reading, including strategies for improvement

### **Beliefs and Mission Statement:**

#### *Beliefs*

The school has eight belief statements. Two salient ones follow:

We believe in:

- Using validated research combined with professional experience as the basis for ALL instructional decisions and to organize and operate our school.
- A safe, orderly and healthy learning environment where all students and staff are entitled to personal respect and dignity.

The Visiting Team could not determine to what extent the school beliefs were an outgrowth of profiling. The beliefs were free of jargon that might not be understood by the general public and all stakeholders. It appears that they express exactly what the school wants expressed and that everyone is willing to make a commitment to the direction indicated by these beliefs.

#### *Mission Statement*

“The mission of Storm Ridge Ranch School is to provide all students with a quality education, which will enable them to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”

The Visiting Team finds that the mission statement is concise, yet sufficiently comprehensive to reflect a collective vision that focuses on the role that Storm Ridge

must assume in shaping the future. It should motivate and give clear purpose and direction to the school.

### **Desired Results for Student Learning:**

No DRSLs were listed in the original report. This is a very important part of the report and, indeed, what accreditation is all about. The revised report explains the school's DRSLs; the entire self-study is built around the DRSLs, which are aligned with the beliefs and mission statement. The school's action plan indicates how the DRSLs will be achieved. The DRSLs are as follows:

All graduates will be:

- Socially responsible
- An effective communicator
- A complex thinker

Specific assessments are listed for each of the "skills" (DRSLs).

### **Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness:**

The school did not include information on instructional and organizational effectiveness in the original self-study. The revised study includes the school's findings. Areas of strength and limitations are listed with supporting evidence.

In summary, the self-study states:

In reviewing the information gathered concerning the effectiveness of our school in regards to the organization and instructional practices, we see areas of great need for improvement as well as areas in which we are strong and well aligned with our school's mission and beliefs. As a special purpose school, we realize that our needs will differ from many traditional larger schools. Our desire for developing curriculum for a wider spectrum of student capabilities and improved on-going professional training can only enhance our educational program. These improvements can be made even with our size as a small educational setting.

### **Action Plan:**

No action plan was included in the original report. However, in the revised report the required information has been added. The Visiting Team notes that the school had a plan at the time of the visit on November 6, 2003.

There are three action plans directly aligned with the three DRSLs, complete with time

lines, a list of resources needed to accomplish the detailed action steps within each plan, and a list of the persons assigned responsibility for overseeing the accomplishment of the three plans. In part 6 of the self-study, the school has explained how the plans have been, are being, and will be implemented and documented. The following summary in this part of the self-study elucidates and clarifies the process and objectives:

The areas that we have focused on, being socially responsible, an effective communicator and a complex thinker are all areas that we have seen change and growth in. Our main purpose in our school is to provide a consistent, quality education, based upon sound principles and supporting data. The entire School Improvement Plan process has provided a map to help guide and narrow our focus so that we were looking at specific, attainable goals that we can implement and document on a daily basis. In working with our School Improvement Plan over the past year it has become very clear that our plan is a dynamic, ever changing process that is evolving from step to step. Challenges such as finances, available resources, and time constraints have been resolved. By keeping the focus of our three main areas of student improvement, we have found effective ways to improve the quality of the education that we are providing to our students.

### **CHAPTER 3: ADHERENCE TO THE NAAS STANDARDS, THE STATE OF UTAH CORE CURRICULUM AND THE UTAH LIFE SKILLS**

The school recently completed the NAAS annual report and submitted it to the State of Utah Accreditation Committee as required. A response was made to each of the eleven standards. Faculty, administrators and other constituents were unaware of the Utah Life Skills as a concept. However, the teaching of those skills is evident in the program at Storm Ridge.

The Visiting Team observed the following concerning compliance with the eleven standards of NAAS:

#### **Standard I—Educational Program**

The school is in compliance with this standard. The Utah State Core Curriculum is followed.

#### **Standard II—Student Personnel Services**

The school meets this standard, since licensed therapists and social workers work with students. However, the part-time services of a licensed guidance counselor could be utilized.

**Standard III—School Plant and Equipment**

The school meets this standard. Facilities are adequate.

**Standard IV—Library Media**

This standard is not met. The school has been working to improve its modest library since the time of the candidacy visit. The students can now use the Internet to get information. The local public library is also used. There is no certified librarian in this school or in the local school district.

**Standard V—Records**

Records are kept as per NAAS requirements.

**Standard VI—School Improvement**

No information on this was given in the self-study.

**Standard VII—Preparation of Personnel**

All teachers hold current state educator licenses.

**Standard VIII—Administration**

The school does not, at the present time, have a licensed administrator. This is in the process of being resolved.

**Standard IX—Teacher Load**

This standard is met. Teacher-students ratios are very low.

**Standard X--Student Activities**

This standard is met.

**Standard XI—Business Practices**

The school is in compliance with the requirements of NAAS.

## **CHAPTER 4: GENERAL COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Commendations:**

- A nurturing environment has been created at Storm Ridge Ranch.
- The school has made commendable progress since being accepted for candidacy.
- Schoolwide DRSLs are now aligned with the profiling information, the mission statement, and the school beliefs.
- The school has developed an action plan (school improvement plan or SIP) that is aligned with profiling, the mission statement, the belief statements, and the DRSLs.
- The school has now consulted the NSSE manual, *School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance*, as well as the Utah accreditation manual, *Collaborating for Student Achievement*, and rewritten the self-study, making sure that each of the following six sections is labeled and addressed:
  1. The school profile
  2. Beliefs and mission statement
  3. Desired results for student learning
  4. Analyzing instruction and organizational effectiveness
  5. The action plan for achieving the DRSLs and school improvement (SIP)
  6. Implementation of the plan, which will include who does what when and exactly what is needed for achieving the objectives of the plan

### **Recommendations:**

- The school needs to broaden the profiling which has been completed and consider including more information, such as follow-up studies, surveys of parents, community surveys, and other pertinent information that would give a more complete, broad picture of Storm Ridge Ranch.